

Historic Building Appraisal
MacIntosh Fort (Nga Yiu)
Nga Yiu, Sha Tau Kok, New Territories

MacIntosh Forts (麥景陶碉堡) were built along Shenzhen River (深圳河) and served as observation posts to strengthen border defense. A total of seven posts were built **between 1949 and 1953** when there was an influx of Chinese refugees and border incidents of armed clashes between the police and refugees. In May 1949, for example, two policemen were killed and their revolvers were stolen. *Historical Interest*

The seven observation posts are located from east to west at Pak Kung Au (伯公坳), Kong Shan (礦山), Pak Fu Shan (白虎山), Nga Yiu (瓦窯), Nam Hang (南坑), Ma Tso Lung (馬草壟) and Pak Hok Chau (白鶴洲). They are in a chain, covering most parts of the land frontier. They stand on prominent hilltops; of which the highest is over 700 feet above sea level; which gives them an excellent field of observation.

MacIntosh Forts were named after Police Commissioner **Duncan William MacIntosh** (in office, 1946-1953) who decided to build a chain of observation posts (guarded day and night) to combat illegal immigration and cross-border criminal activities. They were dubbed “MacIntosh Cathedrals” because of their distinctive appearance against the skyline.

MacIntosh Fort (Nga Yiu) has the minimal amount of alterations. For the post at Nga Yiu, windows secured by original locks are retained. For the other posts, they have been altered and have replacement aluminium windows. There are only minor deviations among the MacIntosh Forts. The main difference is the shape of the flat roof. A circular shape is adopted in the one at Nga Yiu instead of octagonal shapes.

All the MacIntosh Forts were built in reinforced concrete of the same style and of very similar design and almost identical layout. There are only minor deviations between them. The origin of the design is not known, but it may have its origins in remote hill-top and desert out-posts of the North-West frontier of India and the Middle East. Another suggestion is that the design may have its origins in naval architecture due to the resemblance of the bridge of a ship. The design does not fall neatly into any of the usual architectural classifications, but may be categorized as **Modern Utilitarian**. *Architectural Merit*

The posts have an unusual layout with a round two-storey observation

tower situated at the apex of a chevron plan formed by two single-storey wings set at an angle on either side of the tower. The observation tower faces north and the rear entrance is splayed across the internal angle formed by the two wings. The towers have circular or octagonal shaped flat roofs and the flat roofs to the wings have battlemented parapets. Internally the accommodation is very basic consisting of a bunk room, small kitchen, shower and toilet. An internal cat ladder gives access to the tower and the flat roof. Externally the posts are surrounded by chain link fencing and barbed wire. Some have extra latrines also generator rooms, water tanks and even pillboxes for defensive purposes.

There are seven MacIntosh Forts in Hong Kong almost all of them in the Frontier Closed Area, except the one in Pak Hok Chau. They have historical and built heritage value. Except for minor alterations they all retain their original appearance.

*Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity*

The social value of the observation posts lies in the role they played in bringing law and order to the frontier and in the control of illegal immigration. Being situated in the Closed Area they are not widely known by the general public, only to the police and certain government departments.

*Social Value
& Local
Interest*

Apart from the seven MacIntosh Forts, there were other different kinds of observation post along the border area. For example, Lin Ma Hang Observation Post (now ruined) is believed to have been built earlier than the MacIntosh Forts. Nam Sang Wai Observation Post, situated at the peak of Nam Sang Wai and near Nam Sang Wai Road, was re-built in 1963 and is deserted now. It was said that besides the 1st line of Marine Force and the 2nd line of border police force, Nam Sang Wai Observation Post was the final defence line to combat illegal immigration and other cross-boundary criminal activities.

Group Value